Gail Hershatter’s book *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China’s Collective Past* is based on more than one decade of research she carried out with Gao Xiaoxian, a native of their research site, Shaanxi Province, and both a research office director of the Shaanxi Provincial Women’s Federation and Secretary General of the Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family. When the two first met in Beijing in 1992, they discovered a common interest in early socialism in rural China and dissatisfaction with the lack of women’s voice on that issue. The result was this research project, which aims to unveil and understand rural women’s accounts of a series of intervening events (land reform, collectivisation, implementation of the Marriage Law, the Great Leap Forward, and the famine) that profoundly influenced their lives, through the collection and analysis of the relevant memories narrated by these rural women.

As qualified historians, Hershatter and Gao laid the foundation of their research on extensive and meticulous archival work, and they benefitted greatly from facilities and access provided by local governments and the Shaanxi Provincial Women’s Federation. Nevertheless, due to their reservations about the incompleteness of official history (pp. 3 and 287), they put a greater emphasis on women’s own voices, namely, their oral narratives. Beginning in 1996, Hershatter and Gao interviewed 72 rural women in different villages in four counties in Shaanxi Province (pp. 289-91), whom they revisited repeatedly over the course of ten years (1996-2006). In doing so, the two researchers kept a longitudinal record of those rural women, and eventually Hershatter published this monograph, in which she addresses her research questions on the correlation between women’s life trajectories and rural socialism (p. 6), based on her interpretation of their life stories.

As indicated by the title of this book, its core consists of three elements: rural women, memory, and socialism. Combining any two of the three elements allows readers to generalise the key themes of this book: rural women’s memory, rural women’s socialism, and memory of socialism. In the Introduction of this book, Hershatter explains the “rough chronology” that outlines the framework of her arrangement of those life stories (pp. 8-12). The following ten chapters comprise the main body of this book in which she compares and articulates the three key themes with skilful analysis of rural women’s oral narratives.

Among the three themes, rural women’s memory is the one that runs through the whole book. It is both the main resource and the direct object of Hershatter’s research. This subtle difference often gets blurred, as Hershatter’s writing could easily make readers overlook the fact that while retelling those fascinating stories, she is also expressing her reflections on the gendered memory and its historical, structural, and psychological factors. Therefore, rather than simply being curious listeners, readers are required to be reflexive researchers so as to fully appreciate implications that Hershatter decodes from the content, texture, and context of these oral narratives. (1)

The second theme — rural women’s socialism — leads directly to the key question of this research: what is women’s role in socialism, and how/why is socialism gendered? Hershatter addresses these questions from different aspects when she discusses different issues in specific chapters. For instance, in “Chapter 3: Widow” and “Chapter 4: Activist,” she focuses on the early 1950s (most of the interviewees’ early youth) and demonstrates how living space for those rural women was reconfigured while boundaries between the state, their villages, and their kinship were becoming blurred mainly due to land reform and the Marriage Law. Then chapters 5, 8, and 9 (from the mid-1950s to early 1960s) show the gradual disappearance of the domestic realm for rural women under the impact of collectivisation, the Great Leap Forward and the famine. From a less historical but more feminist perspective, Hershatter discusses the issue of the domestic realm in “Chapter 6: Midwife” and “Chapter 7: Mother.” She argues that the liberation of women from domestic obligations did not in fact free them from heavy housework but rather discredited women’s contributions to family economy and rural construction. Moreover, she suggests that the gender division of labour and devaluation of domestic work together have had long-term effects on rural women’s “double marginalised” status in today’s society.

While wrapping up the whole book in “Chapter 10: Narrator,” Hershatter comes back to the earlier conclusion of “double marginalised” status. She highlights “pitiful” (kelände 可怜的) — a recurring term in the interviewees’ narratives — and summarises the causes of this persistent feeling at different stages of rural women’s lives. Based on her comparison between rural women’s situation in the collective era (gender inequality) and that in the economic reform era (elder neglect), she concludes that the domestic realm has become “a realm of marginalisation of many elderly women” (p. 277) while socially acknowledged notions of gender/woman were stripped away at critical historical junctures. (2)

1. An interesting example is that Hershatter’s female interviewees were less capable than male interviewees of accurately remembering the years of political events. Hershatter argues that this is closely related to the effect of gender division of labour on women’s sense of time. In allusion to this, Hershatter and Gao adopted pictures of 12 zodiac animals to supplement the normal calendar, which was well received by their interviewees (Figure 1).

2. A typical example, as pointed out by Hershatter, is that “a filial daughter-in-law” was a social criterion for “a good/capable woman” when her interviewees married into their husbands’ families, while today’s daughters-in-law are oriented towards their small families and are no longer bound by the old social standard. This could be attributed to the cyclical migration of rural young male labourers and the rise of nuclear families, which are significant changes in the era of economic reform.
Focusing on the disappearance and return of the domestic realm – a significant transformation in these rural women’s lives – Hershatter expands readers’ understanding of China’s collective past by restoring village women’s lived socialism. The 72 women’s narratives not only prove that socialism is indeed gendered, but also illustrate how a gendered perspective could provide historians with more details and emotions as well as new themes and arguments. However, at the conclusion of this book, Hershatter also points out that gender is only one of the useful categories of analysis and that “it needs to be understood as one in an array of powerful relationships” (p. 287). This nuanced attitude shows that Hershatter has inspired and enabled rather than constrained by her feminist perspective.

In relation to the third theme, memory of socialism, the critical question is: what could (not) memory tell us about socialism? Here, Timothy Mitchell’s influence becomes quite obvious. "All socialism is local" (pp. 13-15) cannot be fully justified if local people’s experiences and understandings are excluded from the historiography of socialism. This is where “dry facts” such as statistics, annals, and official documents lose their explanatory power. In this regard, the combination of the first two themes, rural women’s memory of socialism, gives concrete details about the construction of socialism at fragmented and diversified local levels. In this sense, the main chapters of this book (Chapter 2 to Chapter 9) not only present a timeline of “China’s collective past” from pre-1949 to the early 1960s, but also show readers how a local sense of state and socialism was produced and embodied from rural women’s perspectives. According to Hershatter, women, who tend to disaggregate events into concrete details in daily life, provide especially abundant narratives and participatory descriptions of what they contributed to, what they were involved in, and what made them who they are.

Just a step away from socialism, “memory” in this book involves a theoretical and methodological question about the legitimacy of using oral narratives in historical studies. In the Introduction, Hershatter reviews the difficulties she had in maintaining the balance between a historian’s position and an anthropologist’s position. Long references relevant to discussions on memory, narratives, and other related topics indicate the influences she received from philosophy, politics, sociology, psychology, literary theory, and other disciplines.

Hershatter’s attitude is that archives and narratives are equally messy and contaminated; thus their legitimacy lies not in purity but in efficacy (how informative they are) and depends very much on each historian’s purpose, concentration, and interpretation. This reflects the feminist questioning of a “pure,” single, and trustworthy historiography. Of course, theoretical and methodological issues should always be open for discussion, for this is where creations such as the interdisciplinary approach emerge. Readers who are interested in “memory” will find inspiring books and articles on this controversial topic in the References of this book (pp. 411-41).

Reading this book is an eye-opening experience even for a Chinese reader. As Hershatter notes, her research group is a doubly marginalised group that stumbles against the field of early socialism in rural China – the primary question that initiated this research. In those ten years, the two researchers lost some of their interviewees, and Hershatter appeals for more attention to this research area as this particular memory is diminishing daily as the specific generation ages. In both the social and academic sense, this book will serve its purpose if more researchers are inspired to raise more questions on women, rural China, and other related issues.


NATHAN SPERBER

Over the past few years, common interpretations of the Chinese economy propounded in the West have undergone a shift of emphasis. Until quite recently, most media discourse and scholarly analysis were, at bottom, a variation on the theme of liberalisation. The focus was laid on China’s societal transformation from socialism to a fully-fledged capitalist order, or in other words, on the deepening of the country’s market transition. The validity and usefulness of such a perspective is hard to contest, and yet, as a prism through which to understand the present-day Chinese political economy, the notion of liberalisation has become overly obvious, if not a shade simplistic. In effect, the market transition paradigm is being increasingly displaced in favour of its mirror image, namely an all-out insistence on the dirigisme of the Chinese state, ranging from state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to capital allocation, from the renminbi regime to industrial subsidies.

The eerie resilience (so far) of the Chinese economy in the face of the worst global crisis since the Great Depression, combined with the inexorable ascent of China’s top SOEs in the Forbes and Fortune international corporate rankings, have triggered no little soul-searching on Western shores. In 2010, Ian Bremmer’s shocker book The End of the Free Market warned the American public of a global clash between the “market capitalism” of the West and the “state capitalism” of a handful of developing nations, among which China stood as primus inter pares. Bremmer’s ideas, as unsubtle as they are incisive, have been liberally relayed in the mainstream economic press. To many ears, the terms “state capitalism” and “China” have now become a natural pair.

Have we simply witnessed the substitution of one stereotype for another? Probably. And yet, under the veneer of overused labels, essential issues are raised: how does the peculiar interpenetration of politics and economics in...
the PRC distinguish it from developed Western nations as well as from other post-socialist and emerging countries? How is it possible to discern the durable from the transitional among the constituent traits of China’s economic statism? In sum, how do we elucidate the differentia specifica of the Chinese political economy?

In this connection, Marie-Claire Bergère’s decision to focus her latest work on the role of the state in the Chinese economy is most timely. As smooth as it is knowledgeable, Chine: le nouveau capitalisme d’État embraces the thesis of state capitalism as its departure point. It then goes on to explore a number of other aspects of Chinese society, surveyed through the lens of the CCP’s overarching dominance in the realms of economics, politics, and ideology.

The introduction, aptly titled “The end of illusions,” sets the tone: to presuppose a spontaneous tendency towards economic or political liberalisation in China “implies a kind of determinism as thorough as in the Marxist schema” (p. 11). The book then proposes a short retrospective sketch of three decades of Reform and Opening (Chapter 1), followed by a description of the central workings of China’s current “state capitalism” (Chapter 2). Bergère insists in particular on the “national champions,” the central-level firms nominally under the control of SASAC, as well as on the rapid expansion of state-funded investment in the wake of the 2008 stimulus plan, a trend often referred to in China as 国进民退 (guo jin min tui, “the state advances, the private retreats”). Chapters 3 and 4 address the situation of the Chinese domestic private sector, a terrain very familiar to Bergère. The diverse, fragmented, and usually subaltern world of private entrepreneurs is sharply rendered, and the arresting thesis of an absent bourgeois class — “one finds in China neither a triumphant bourgeoisie, nor indeed any kind of bourgeoisie” (p. 133) — is as cogent as it was in Bergère’s Capitalismes et capitalistes en Chine (2007). The internal structure of the CCP is then reviewed, together with its strategies of social control and repression that constitute the coercive side of party-society relations (Chapter 5). This is followed by an exploration of the Party’s efforts at legitimisation — the consensual aspect of party-society relations — with a special emphasis on nationalist mobilisation (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 moves on to provide a critical survey of recent debates on the existence of a unique “model” of development with Chinese characteristics. Joshua Ramo’s oft-cited “Beijing Consensus,” launched in 2004, is increasingly out of fashion, replaced by the “China Model,” or 中国模式, which has been the object of a flurry of publications in the PRC in recent years. It is unmistakably a more nationalist construct than the Beijing Consensus, and it is often accompanied by a rhetoric of identity. Bergère’s work concludes with a chapter examining possible scenarios for the medium term. Reasserting the “institutional agility” of the regime (p. 283), Bergère predicts, with warranted circumspection, an “evolution” — as opposed to a breakdown — of the state-capitalist status quo.

Chine: le nouveau capitalisme d’État thus purports to be a panoramic enquiry into Chinese authoritarianism’s multiple facets today. Although the author, a historian by trade, offers some penetrating insights derived from her past scholarship on the merchant strata in late Qing and Republican China, these remain quite short and peripheral. In terms of sources, Bergère relies in large part on a vast collection of news articles (notably from the New York Times), together with a number of secondary academic references (including the works of Barry Naughton, Nicholas Lardy, and Huang Yasheng). Prospective readers should be warned, however, of the dearth of first-hand material and analysis in the book.

Another note of warning should be made regarding Chine: le nouveau capitalisme d’État. This is not the most accomplished work of its author on the theoretical level, to say the least. Rather, it appears that a conscious choice was made to put readability over conceptual elaboration, with the aim of reaching out to a larger public. On its own terms, this is a success. Packed with information as it is, the book is a pleasant read, thanks in part to the author’s trenchant prose style. A non-specialist reader eager to know more about a subject of such pressing relevance would be very well-advised to peruse it.

The same cannot be said, however, for those who were hoping for Marie-Claire Bergère to throw new conceptual light on an issue that remains bitterly under-theorised in China Studies. The expression “state capitalism,” cited throughout, is never properly defined. As a result, it remains little more than a catchword, and vague and overworn at that. The very notion of “capitalism” would have deserved a better treatment. Thus we are told that “capitalism has never been the dominant form of the reformed Chinese economy” (p. 102), an assertion that will be difficult to gauge for anyone who is not familiar with Bergère’s past scholarship, in particular Capitalismes et Capitalistes en Chine.

In addition to semantic issues of this kind, a minor confusion concerning the public-private nexus in the Chinese economy is apparent. The author seems to oscillate between two incompatible approaches. On the one hand, a static, dichotomistic perspective is implicit in the expression “mixed economy,” which crops up multiple times, as well as in the rather hasty assertion that Huawei, the telecoms equipment giant founded by Ren Zhengfei, is “a fake private firm” (p. 77). On the other hand, this dualistic depiction of the public-private conundrum is fortunately debunked by Bergère herself only two pages later: “Let us abandon, for a time, our Cartesian logic […] in China, not being public does not necessarily mean being private […]” (p. 79); and also: “Chinese capitalism is characterised by […] the tangling of statuses and the overlapping of categories.” This last passage evinces the acuity and subtlety that Bergère has demonstrated so many times in her past research. One has therefore all the more reason to regret that she does not here attempt to explore the implications of being “public” and “private” in the Chinese context.

On a more trivial note, one finds a handful of inaccuracies that should have been prevented by less sloppy editorial work. To provide an example: it is written that “the grey economy […] may represent RMB 9.3 billion ($1.47 billion) as of 2010.” A reference is made to The New York Times, but the proper source is surely the report produced by Wang Xiaolu for Crédit Suisse in 2010, which estimated the grey economy at RMB 9.3 trillion in 2008 — about 30 per cent of the Chinese GDP. (2) Or this straightforward blunder: that the CCP was founded in 1921 in the former French concession of Beijing (p. 184).

Such weaknesses, most of them minor, should not detract from the overall quality of Marie-Claire Bergère’s latest work. The book is highly informative and elegantly written; it addresses a topic of crucial relevance; and it comes from a scholar with tremendous research experience on the Chinese economy.

As this book review is being written, current events seem to be moving fast on the front of China’s “state capitalism.” The fifth generation of Chinese leadership took over the organs of government last March, and advocates of a new wave of economic reform are harbouring high hopes of liberalisa-

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1. The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, in Chinese 国务院国有资产监督管理委员会 or 国资委.
tion in view of the third plenum of the CCP Central Committee scheduled for this autumn. Last year, the oft-mentioned report *China 2030*, co-written by the World Bank and the Development Research Centre of the State Council, called for a deregulation of the financial sector together with a privatisation of state assets. A few Pekinologists believe that Li Keqiang is eager to push forward implementation of this report. We might soon be able to tell whether the so-called “state capitalism” of the PRC has passed its peak.

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TANGUY LE PESANT

Based on a highly detailed study of Taiwanese entrepreneurship from its origins to the present, this book seeks to examine Sino-Taiwanese discord, taking a political economy approach. In her introduction, Françoise Mengin rightly stresses that this dispute cannot be understood without “combining social logics with that of conflict of sovereignty,” (p. 20) and without situating the inner workings of the movement in their historicity. One of the strength of this book is to have succeeded in this task with the help of an impressive bibliography and a large number of interviews spread over 15 years that reveal the logic and dynamics structuring and orienting the evolution of Taiwan-China relations since World War II. At the same time, the study of Taiwan’s case, of its entrepreneurs, and of cross-strait relations gives Mengin the opportunity to reflect on more general academic discussions: the relevance of the developmental state concept forged in the 1980s, the relations between transnational actors and the nation state, the notion of border, the supposed existence of a Chinese capitalism, or even the issue of China’s democratisation.

The first of the four chapters is devoted to the genesis of Taiwanese entrepreneurship. It shows that considerations of an exclusively political nature lay behind the Kuomintang’s (KMT) government’s economic choices: the colonial regime clinging to power and a war economy both meant to serve the project of recapturing the mainland and completing the nationalist revolution lead by the KMT, which retreated to the island in 1949. Thus, while the measures adopted might have emanated from a clearly anti-capitalist ideology or contributed ultimately to the rise of the private sector and market economy, they did not seek so much to optimise conditions for Taiwan’s economic development as to ensure the party-state’s cornering of a maximum of resources and to prevent the birth of any interest group capable of rising against it. Such monopoly over all key economic sectors helped control major private enterprises in which the state was both the main supplier and the client. Major enterprises thus remained protected and imprisoned in a rentier economic sphere whose logic was clearly not “developmental”: the state did not hesitate to imperil the rise of some sectors in order to preserve its interests, as was the case with the automobile industry. Similarly, the stranglehold over the banking sector applied breaks to the growth of a private sector free of the KMT state’s control and blocked the formation of any group of major financiers who could have constituted a counter-power. As for measures that ushered in Taiwan’s prosperity such as the 19-Point Reform of 1960 and export promotion, Mengin notes that they complied with military imperatives — to continue financing the armed forces’ colossal budget as well as to be free of US aid and the pressures it entailed. However, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which managed to benefit from this opportunity to emerge as the motor of Taiwan’s economy, did not get direct state support. Rather, they grew on the strength of everything they were excluded from. In line with recent studies, this chapter seeks to debunk the idea — ever present in the discourse of the Kuomintang and its supporters — that Taiwan’s “economic miracle” resulted from judicious choices made by the government throughout the dictatorship era.

The next chapter reinforces the point. Faced with the diplomatic crisis of the 1970s, the Kuomintang sought to benefit from the strong economic growth that was underway by boosting its bruised legitimacy. Drawing inspiration from Michel Foucault and Jean-François Bayart, the author sets out the characteristics of this process. She shows first of all that while economic success certainly boosted the KMT state’s legitimacy, it was only complementary legitimacy, whose “core” remained the Greater China ideology coupled with the achievement of nationalist revolution. A few years ahead of Deng Xiaoping’s China, Chiang Ching-kuo’s Republic of China entered a “Thermidorian situation,” which Bayart defines as the passage “from one of Utopian mobilisation to that of management reasoning,” the professionalisation of the ruling class meanwhile happening alongside “the perpetuation of the ideology, vocabulary, and revolutionary imagination” (p. 121). This professionalisation and the launch of the semi-conductor industry at the same time are often considered solid proofs of the existence of a developmental state in Taiwan. However Mengin refutes this thesis, noting that the industry’s success relied mainly on a handful of men (including the ministers of economic affairs and of finance) assisted by some foreign advisers who often had to fight against the state machinery’s reluctance, and that on the other hand, despite its partial technocratisation, the state was far from being a homogenous team producing a perfectly integrated and coherent economic policy. On the contrary, its different local administrations and ramifications represented many bastions, fiefs, and challenges for a ruling class closely linked to local factions and economic powers. This problem only grew with the regime’s democratisation under president Lee Teng-hui. As for the rapid growth of SMEs in the 1970s-1980s, it mainly occurred outside of the state regulation framework and even transgressed it. Unable to benefit from protection or financial support that the state channelled to some major groups, to which it also opened up access to the internal market mostly under its control, the SMEs grew mainly with family backing and by turning to multinationals’ sub-contracts.

The third chapter focuses on the taishang – Taiwanese entrepreneurs doing business in China. It relies notably on numerous interviews conducted on both sides of the Taiwan Strait – with Taiwanese entrepreneurs and with officials of various administrations concerned with the relocation of production units to China. The extent of relocation is presented as a consequence of the political and economic configurations analysed in the first two chap-
ters. First of all, the fact that the Sino-Taiwanese border remained closed until 2008 – direct legacy of the "unfinished war" – influenced the taishang’s investment choices. By compelling people, assets, and capital to transit through a third entity, successive Taiwanese governments actually allowed the taishang to be free of any control they could have wielded over the relocations. Similarly, deprived of Taipei’s protection, the taishang were goaded to bargain directly with China’s local bureaucracies and to form autonomous associations in order to defend their interests. The heads of Taiwanese businesses also sought out in China conditions similar to those in Taiwan during the dictatorship era. Referring once again to Bayart’s work on "liminal experience" (p. 281), Mengin shows that the taishang set out to profit from their "in-between status – neither fully Chinese nor fully foreigners” in a strategy of resource accumulation (economic, social, and cultural capital) by exploiting the existence of the border and not by pushing for its disappearance. Thus the taishang, like many others, are transnational actors who use borders and the differentials they produce, far from helping build a post-national world. The book makes here two important points. First, that the multiplication of transnational actors does not imply an end to borders and territories. Second, the taishang’s presence and their investments certainly do not contribute to the development of democracy in China, contrary to what the KMT hopes or wants to believe. Their collusion with Chinese local bureaucracies have boosted rentier monopoly practices and stoked labour exploitation based on a paternalistic and quasi-military organisation of factories, in complete contrast to Taiwan’s nascent democratic values. It has also led to the taishang being subject to the one-China principle and thus serving Beijing’s irredentist policy.

The fourth chapter traces with great precision the stages of gradual opening of the Sino-Taiwanese border in the decade starting in 2000. It shows how the Chen Shui-bian government’s rejection of the one-China principle, the Chinese authorities’ persistent refusal to negotiate with an administration that did not recognise the principle, and the Kuomintang’s move to bypass the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) led to a “de-governmentalisation” and privatisation of the bilateral talks process. But this configuration and the KMT’s alacrity to reopen dialogue with the CCP in a bid to marginalise the DPP and more broadly the cause of Taiwan independence also opened a breach that the Beijing’s United Front policy stepped into. While the KMT’s return to power led to a “re-governmentalisation” of talks and the signing of 18 agreements between June 2008 and August 2012, the Ma Ying-jeou government has also made possible an unprecedented deployment of the United Front policy, the effects of which threaten the survival of Taiwanese democracy. Cross-strait détente has taken place mainly on Beijing’s conditions and to its benefit; party-to-party discussions determine the rhythm and agenda of negotiations, which are then conducted by para-governmental organs and tend to bypass parliamentary control mechanisms; Taiwan seems increasingly reduced to the status of a mere economy on the international scene; Taipei’s foreign policy shows disquieting signs of alignment with Beijing’s positions; fear of offending Chinese authorities has led to forms of censorship and self-censorship, be it in government practices that routinely hurt Taiwan’s sovereignty and public freedoms or in some key sectors of society such as the media.

The book ends with a pessimistic conclusion about Taiwan’s political future. Two scenarios are set out. The first sees the dilution of the multi-party system through the DPP’s inability to find a credible alternative to the one China principle and through the continuation in power of the KMT, which would be seen in this context as the only political force capable of negoti-
A t the initiative of its mayor in 2001, Shanghai municipality launched an urbanisation programme entitled “One City, Nine Towns.” The programme, integrated with an overall plan that included projects to develop some of Shanghai’s satellite towns, planned the creation of ten new cities with experimental thematic zones featuring mainly European architecture. The result was construction of an “English neighbourhood” at Songjiang, a “German neighbourhood” at Anting, a “Dutch” one at Gaoqiao, a “Swedish” one at Luodian, and so on. The phenomenon of themed cities or areas in China featuring architecture inspired largely or even wholly by European and North American models has received little academic attention in the West thus far. However, many blogs collect news articles and accounts by foreign tourists and architects on this phenomenon, and the cities covered by the “One City, Nine Towns” programme have been in the spotlight especially in architectural circles. But these case studies constitute only the visible and well-reported tip of the iceberg and hide what in reality is a phenomenon that has spread throughout the country and that is much more intense as a result.

The book by Bianca Bosker, a graduate of Princeton University and now a journalist at Huffington Post, is a real tour de force in gathering a vast mass of documents and providing a description and general explanation of the phenomenon based on many cases. She starts off by defining these objects, the “simulacrascapes” (perhaps the term alludes to Arjun Appadurai’s ethnoscapes, but there is no reference to him in the book) as socio-cultural products: the most recent manifestation of a culture of imitation that is properly Chinese as well as the result of social change in China through the rise of a wealthy middle class drawn to the image of success that European products evoke. With this definition, Bosker seeks to address through her analysis classic issues of originality and authenticity would be valued. Numerous and diverse examples show that a good copy is valued in China, even and especially when difficult to distinguish from the original. Bosker notes this difference in values between China and the West to show the limits of post-modern analysis (comparing Chinese imitations with theme parks) to delve more deeply into the phenomenon’s complexity and its particularity in China.

However, even if this theoretical analysis is needed to grasp the socio-cultural process at work, the China/West dichotomy as seen in the culture of copying versus authenticity is rather ambitious: examples based on particular links to imitation in China can be countered with counterparts from European history. While she has managed to skirt post-modern theory, which has generally been associated with new districts with foreign architecture, Bosker restricts herself to the vision of a bipolar world where two contrasting cultures oppose each other, China being seen as still subject to influences from a West reduced to a post-modern cosmology, although half a century old and still debated.

Such a reading seems to be one of the limitations in the author’s analysis of the phenomenon. She tends to proceed from culturalist generalisations, whereas taking into account the social processes leading to the simulacrascapes would have helped her see the multiplicity of situations and take a more nuanced approach. An example of this problem crops up in the fourth chapter, in which Bosker seeks to understand the motivations behind the large-scale replication of foreign architectures and, simultaneously, reasons for not reproducing Chinese traditional architecture models. Her idea is that for the government, implicated at every level of decision-making, imitations of the West are a source of greater profit in the short term (as they convey an image of affluence and prestige) and symbolise China’s capacity and power to close the gap and even overtake the West technically. In the author’s eyes, copies of European traditional style constitute for the Chinese government a means of symbolically conquering the West’s past and present, and the trophies of such conquest.

This explanation, generalised for all situations, must confront some reservations based on experiences on the ground. The fact is that Bosker’s study, conducted between 2006 and 2008, was limited to imitations that were visible and accessible to the public, meaning that the state’s implication was per force bigger given the touristic function and the symbolism of such zones. But there is a notable difference between copies such as those in the “One City, Nine Towns” programme initiated by the mayor of Shanghai, the nation’s economic capital, and thus naturally under media spotlight beyond China’s borders – and zones closed to the public, such as the gated communities on Chongqing’s periphery, for instance, whose architectural quality is appreciated by both institutions and residents — some neighbourhoods have been built by the private developer Longfor (Longhu) in Mediterranean styles — and where the local government’s role was mainly to grant approval and cede land use rights. The motivations of the actors (government agents, promoters, buyers, and residents) vary according to context and situation, something Bosker sometimes forgets.

Nevertheless, the author’s research provides a good deal of data on the forms such imitations can take, from simply copying to adhering more to a Chinese housing model (see Chapter Three). It is helped by rather impressive photographic documentation throughout the book, as well as information on local lifestyles. Although the research was focused on real estate promoters (apparently the author’s main source of information, as well as architects and academics specialising in Chinese studies), Bosker also met residents who told her about their lives and aspirations (see the fifth and last chapter).

Therefore, apart from various interpretations of processes at work, be it from a more culturalist or socio-historic viewpoint, despite some drawbacks linked to an insufficiently circumscribed study matter and some disputable
data, given that fieldwork is over five years old – which is considerable, given China’s current rate of development – the book offers accurate and relevant information on the forms imitation takes, and changes in demand and in the capacities of China’s new and upper middle classes and their situation. Above all, from a more general outlook, it shows that the style of replication of European architectures is an authentically endogenous phenomenon, in the sense that far from incarnating a process of externally forced acculturation linked to China’s reintegration into globalised networks – a sort of “Americanisation” or “Europeanisation” – it reflects, on the contrary, a new form of what Thierry Sanjuan calls the “Chinese globalisation.”

TRANSLATED BY N. JAYARAM.

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Vivian P.Y. Lee (ed),

VANESSA FRANGVILLE

East Asian cinemas have become increasingly visible in the West over the course of the past decade. Successful East Asian blockbusters (and often their American remakes), from Japanese and Korean horror films to Chinese and Hong Kong martial art films, have emerged on the global scene and have dramatically changed the global cinematic industry. The transnationalisation of East Asian cinemas has also created new dynamics between Hollywood, European, and Asian cinemas. Consequently, cinemas of East Asia have captured the attention of academics, critics, and general audiences. Recent scholarship has emphasised the transnational and transregional aspects of these cinemas, previously studied from a national perspective.

East Asian Cinemas: Regional Flows and Global Transformations, prefaced by prominent Chinese film scholar Zhang Yingjin, investigates the flow of culture between China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan through 11 chapters. The book opens with an introduction by its editor, Vivian P.Y. Lee, who examines the historical connection between these countries and the way Asia, defined as an idea in progress rather than a fixed entity, has been fractured by racial and political tension. The author points out that this “shared history” albeit tormented, has created, with the input of economic globalisation, a space in which different Asian countries have come together again to coproduce some of the most successful regional blockbusters. She considers Japan as a centrifugal force in the making of an “Asian cinema” and in the “consumption of Asia” through film, a cultural hegemony challenged by South Korea and China over the last two decades.

The first part of the book explores the relationship between East Asian film industries and Hollywood. While Hong Yin and Zhiwei Xiao set out a rather alarmist statement, seeing the remaking and “Hollywoodisation” of successful Asian films as a one-way transfer for the exclusive profit of the American industry, Song Hwee Lim’s chapter is more nuanced. Song shows that East Asian directors have also actively participated in the transplantation of Asian films for American and global audiences, being invited to Hollywood to produce remakes of their own films, thus opening the door for new types of collaboration and a more balanced relationship. Song’s analysis is arguably the most pertinent in this first section as it replaces this “transpecific traffic” in a wider context and alongside linguistic, cultural, and economic negotiations that also take place within Asia.

The second section gathers four chapters on film genres and aesthetics in a transnational context. Gina Marchetti draws parallels between Jia Zhangke’s Xiao Wu, Patrick Tam’s After This Our Exile, and French director Robert Bresson’s work, highlighting their differences and shared features in style and content. Marchetti elaborates on postmodernist theories to interpret Jia and Tam’s realism as a critical means to depict China and the Chinese diaspora. Eric K.W. Yu’s chapter is concerned with Chow Yun Fat’s parody of James Bond in a late British colonial context and at the handover of Hong Kong back to China. Chapters 5 and 6 go back to the issue of transposing East Asian cinemas into trans-regional and transnational models, with a focus on horror films. Nikki J.Y. Lee convincingly develops the argument that Asian horror films are constructed through the domestic national film industry and through regional and trans-regional markets, and represent an alternative to Hollywood and other national horror films. Vivian P.Y. Lee, on the other hand, takes Shimizu Takashi’s US remake of Ju-on and Kim Ji-woon’s The Good, the Bad and the Weird as case studies to demonstrate how the crossover between the “local” and the “global” produces a “lingua franca” of popular cinema.

The third part of the book deals with cinematic representations of national history and identity. Kinnie Shuk-ting Yau explores the influence of Neo-conservatism in the Japanese film industry through four well-known Japanese directors, Ishihara Shintaro, Kitano Takeshi, Matsumoto Hitoshi, and Kubozuka Yosuke. In Chapter 8, Tsung-yi Michelle Huang examines cinematic representations of Hong Kong’s integration with the Pearl River Delta in Peter Chan’s Comrades, Almost a Love Story and Fruit Chan’s Durian Durian. Chapter 9 questions the definition of “Asianness” in “Asian films.” Ti Wei traces the history of the Asian coproduction and recalls the necessity to consider terms such as “Asian cinema” or “East Asian cinema” with caution. This chapter is somehow redundant with previous chapters and might have been placed earlier in the collection.

The final segment of the book puts together interviews with major East Asian cinema stakeholders and discusses the “pros” and “cons” of film co-production. These interviews, as announced by the editor in the introduction, successfully manage to “bridge the gap between academic scholarship and the ‘realpolitik’ of the filmmaking world” (p. 8). Stephanie DeBoer’s interviews with three prominent Japanese media and film producers reflect upon conflicting discourses on Asian coproduction. In the last chapter, Vivian P.Y. Lee has a discussion with a veteran Hong Kong filmmaker and a Singaporean producer on the development of China’s film industry in relation to the Asian coproduction network.

This book adds to the abundant collection of publications on East Asian cinemas in the past few years. East Asian Cinemas is not an introduction to
East Asian films: it is mainly targeted to a well-informed readership, from Asian film fans to Asian film scholars. The relevance and quality of the 11 chapters that comprise the book are uneven, with some of the arguments being repetitive. Nevertheless, to its credit, the book addresses two critical issues in contemporary East Asian film industries: the trans-nationalisation of Asian cinemas in terms of film aesthetics, style, and construction of genre films; and the development and prospects of film coproduction between (East) Asian countries. Interviews in the last part of the book are particularly interesting as they give new insights on competing discourses on coproduction from the perspective of the filmmaking world.

East Asian Cinemas is perhaps better read along with Kinnia Shuk-ting Yau’s East Asian Cinema and Cultural Heritage: From China, Hong Kong, Taiwan to Japan and South Korea (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Published the same year, this collection of papers includes chapters by many of the contributors to East Asian Cinemas and can complement its third part. A readership less familiar with East Asian cinemas will prefer the clarity and coherence of Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai’s East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film (I.B. Tauris, 2008).

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**Books received**

**Delia Devin,**
*Mao: A Very Short Introduction,*

**Stephen Bell, Hui Feng,**
The Rise of the People’s Bank of China,

**John Osburg,**
*Anxious Wealth: Money and Morality Among China’s New Rich,*

**Léon Vandermeersch,**
*Les deux raisons de la pensée chinoise. Divination et idéographie,*

**Perry Link,**
*An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics,*

**Nancy Bernkopf Tucker,**
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**Chloé Froissart,**
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